

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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METHAMPHETAMINE SENTENCES IMPOSED

Randy G. Massey, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, today announced the recent sentencing in United States District Court in Benton of four defendants in their roles in a large methamphetamine manufacturing and distribution conspiracy centered in Wayne and White Counties. These convictions and sentences resulted from a long term and ongoing investigation into the manufacture of methamphetamine in those two counties. Thus far, that investigation, which began in 2003, has resulted in the federal indictment of 33 individuals in related cases who, in total, were responsible for the manufacture or attempted manufacture of the equivalent of over 400,000 grams of methamphetamine.

THOMAS W. HUTCHINSON, Jr., age 48, of Fairfield, Illinois, was sentenced on April 19, 2006, to a term of 240 months imprisonment, a fine of \$200, a special assessment of \$100, and a term of 10 years supervised release to follow his incarceration.

KEVIN W. MELTON, age 45, of Fairfield, Illinois, was sentenced on April 28, 2006, to a term of 151 months imprisonment, a fine of \$825, a special assessment of \$100, and a term of 5 years supervised release to follow his incarceration.

MICHAEL B. GREGORY, age 45, of Keens, Illinois, was sentenced on April 20, 2006, to a term of 135 months imprisonment, a fine of \$750, a special assessment of \$100, and a term of 5 years supervised release to follow his incarceration.

ELMER F. WECCELE, age 49, of Fairfield, Illinois, was sentenced on April 20, 2006, to a term of 108 months imprisonment, a fine of \$750, a special assessment of \$100, and a term of 5 years supervised release to follow his incarceration.

Under Federal law, parole has been abolished and defendants are required to serve at least 85 percent of their sentences.

In addition to the 31 defendants who have been indicted federally, over 20 additional defendants have been prosecuted in related cases in state court by the State's Attorneys in Wayne and White Counties.

Investigation into the case is being led by the Carmi office of the Southern Illinois Drug Task Force, with the assistance of the Illinois State Police, the Fairfield Police Department, the Carmi Police Department, the White County Sheriff's Department, the Joint Narcotics Unit of the Mt. Vernon Police Department and Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, the Wayne County State's Attorney's Office, the White County State's Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James M. Cutchin.